



The Arc of Connecticut
43 Woodland Street
Suite 260
Hartford, CT 06105

T 860 246-6400
www.thearcct.org

March 8, 2012

**House Bill 5016 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS
CONCERNING GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

Opposition to the merger of the Office of Protection & Advocacy
Submitted by Nora Duncan, Executive Director

The Arc Connecticut is a 60-year old advocacy organization committed to protecting the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to promoting opportunities for their full inclusion in the life of their communities.

We expressed concerns in February to the Committee about Sections 75-82 of House Bill 5016, which consolidates the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (OPA) with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO). The very mission of The Arc Connecticut is to advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and anything that compromises the independence of OPA, risks federal safeguards or funding is a significant concern.

The Arc Connecticut opposes the merger. It is important that the head of Protection & Advocacy be an independent voice with credibility and full investigatory powers. The merger does in fact risk violating the federal laws that require independence of the OPA and, therefore, also risks much needed federal funding.

The Arc Connecticut appeals to the members of the Committee to fully analyze this proposal and its potential unintended consequences. We understand that there is discussion about merger of OPA into the Office of Governmental Accountability, but this brings up very similar concerns. The comparatively small administrative savings associated with the merger are not enough to justify the potential ramifications of a much weakened Protection & Advocacy authority on individuals with disabilities and their families.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and please do not hesitate to call upon The Arc Connecticut for more information or further clarification of our position.